

No. 1217

9p

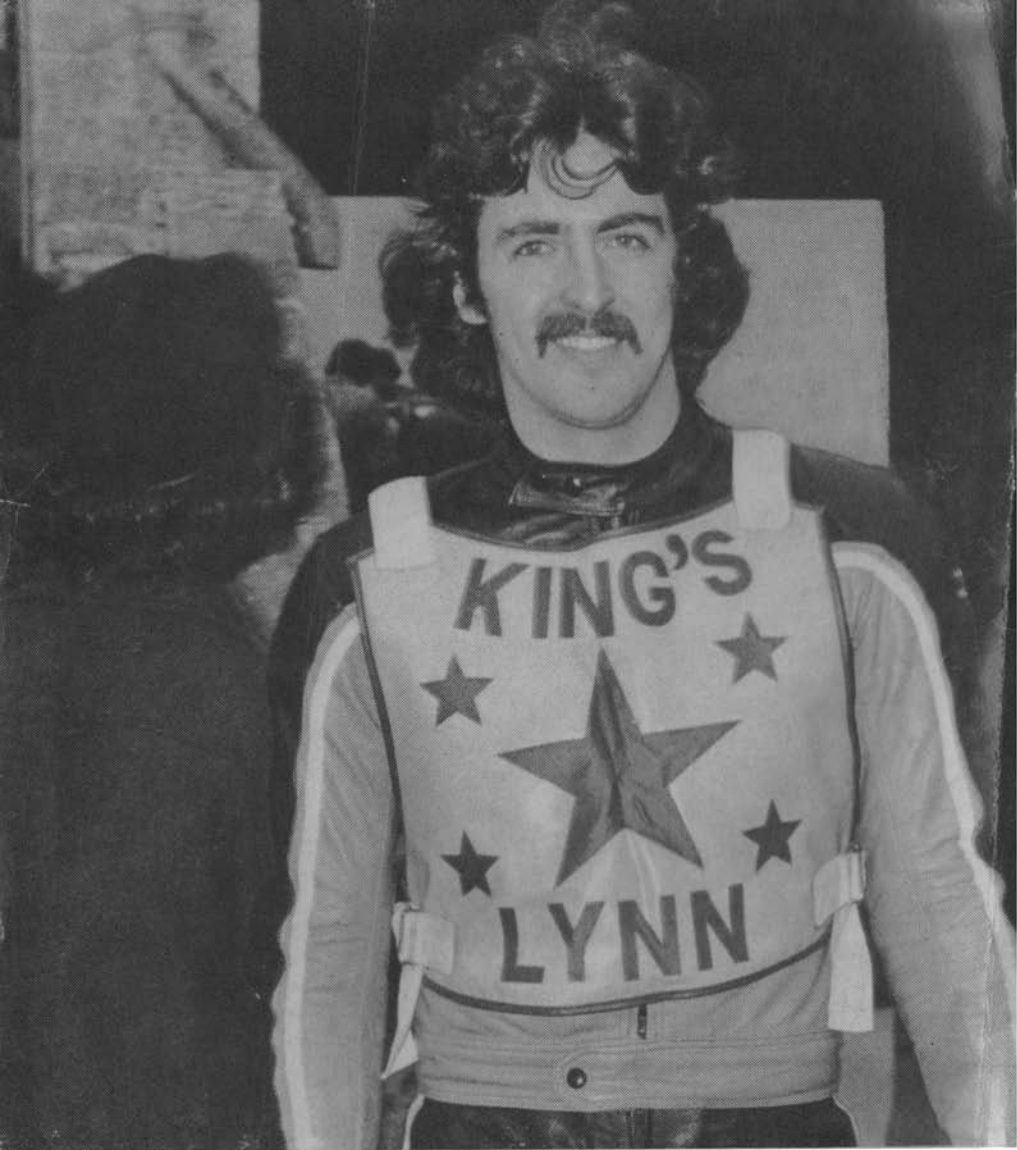
AUS. N.Z. 35c

Commando

WAR STORIES IN PICTURES



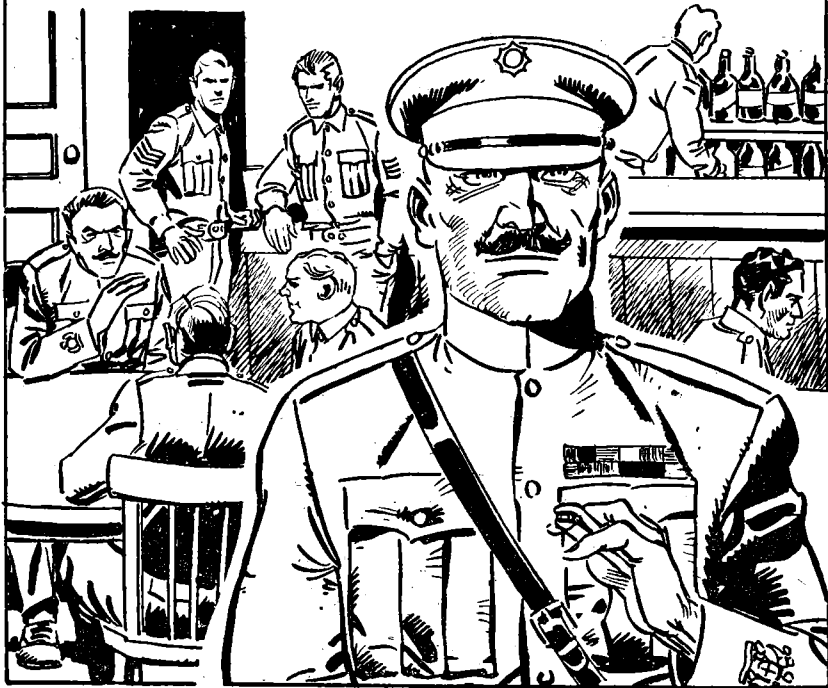
THE OLD WAR-HORSE



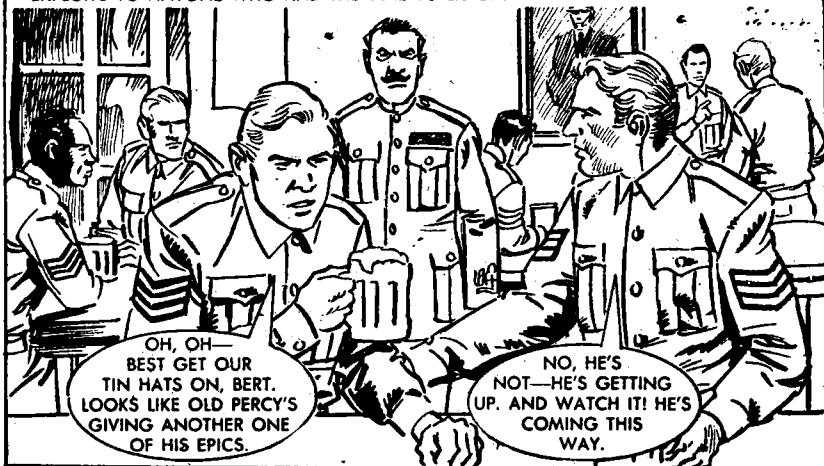
Motor-Cycle Stars – Paul Tyrer

The OLD WAR-HORSE

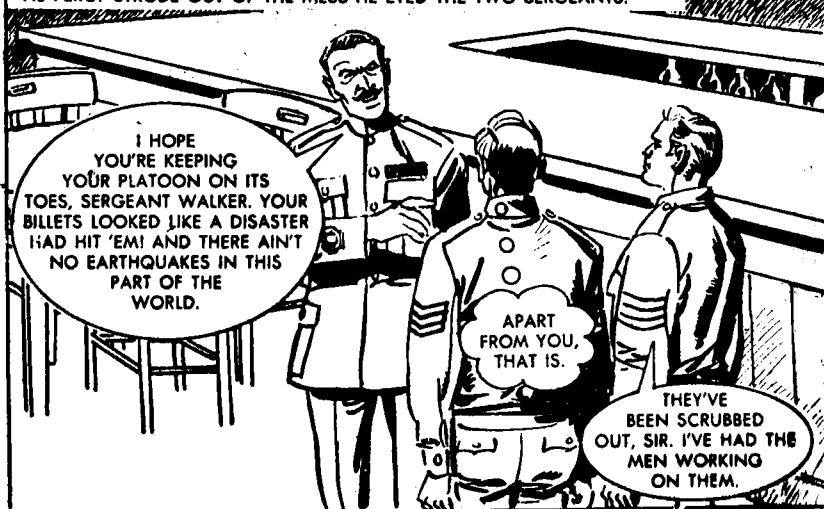
1940 —THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN FRANCE WERE CAUGHT IN THAT PERIOD KNOWN AS THE "PHONEY WAR" WHEN IT SEEMED NOTHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN. AND FOR REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR PERCY LANSDALE, M.M., STATIONED WITH HIS REGIMENT, THIS SITTING ABOUT WAS PROVING DIFFICULT TO BEAR. PERCY WAS A PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, TRAINED TO FIGHT. HE'D SERVED WITH DISTINCTION ON THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER OF INDIA AND FOUGHT IN WORLD WAR ONE. NOW HE WAS JUST ITCHING TO GET BACK INTO THE THICK OF IT . . .



THE ONLY TROUBLE WAS THAT THE GERMANS DIDN'T SEEM TO SHARE PERCY'S ENTHUSIASM FOR ACTION. SO THE R.S.M. FOUGHT THE BOREDOM BY TELLING STORIES OF HIS PAST EXPLOITS TO ANYONE WHO HAD THE TIME TO LISTEN.



AS PERCY STRODE OUT OF THE MESS HE EYED THE TWO SERGEANTS.



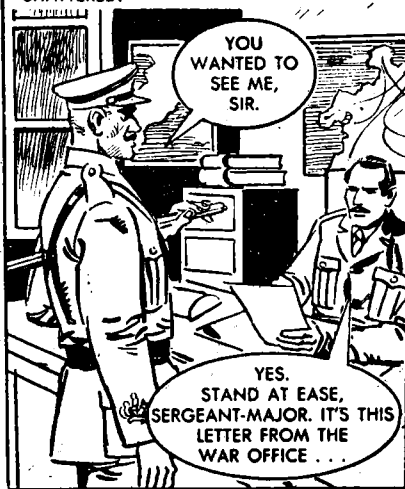
THE R.S.M. WAS A STRICT, BUT FAIR, DISCIPLINARIAN. AND IN HIS BOOK THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THE BATTALION ALERT WAS TO MAKE SURE THERE WAS NO SLACKING.



AS THE CLERK SPOKE PERCY FELT A SURGE OF EXCITEMENT—PERHAPS THIS WAS IT.



BUT HIS HOPES WERE SOON TO BE SHATTERED.



FOR A MOMENT PERCY WAS PUZZLED. THEN, WHEN THE C.O. BEGAN TO EXPLAIN, HE COULD HARDLY BELIEVE HIS EARS.

LETTER, SIR? WHAT ABOUT—
ARE WE MOVING UP TO
THE FRONT?

NOTHING
SO DRAMATIC. THEY
NEED SENIOR N.C.O.s OVER
FORTY-FIVE TO TRAIN NEW
RECRUITS. JUST THE JOB FOR A MAN
WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE,
DON'T YOU AGREE?

THE C.O. FELT THAT PERCY WAS TOO SET IN HIS WAYS FOR THIS NEW WAR. WHAT THE REGIMENT NEEDED WAS SOME NEW BLOOD IN THE SENIOR RANKS. PERCY, OF COURSE, THOUGHT OTHERWISE . . .

YOU CAN'T
BE THINKING OF
SENDING ME BACK TO
ENGLAND, SIR? YOU'LL NEED MEN
LIKE ME—ESPECIALLY WHEN
JERRY DECIDES TO
ATTACK.

THAT'S JUST
WHAT I AM GOING TO DO,
SERGEANT-MAJOR. AND YOU
MUSTN'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS.
INTELLIGENCE SAYS THE
GERMANS AREN'T READY
TO ATTACK.



HIDING HIS ANGER AND DISAPPOINTMENT, PERCY STAMPED TO ATTENTION AS THE C.O. OUTLINED THE DETAILS.

I'VE ALREADY MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUR REPLACEMENT, SERGEANT-MAJOR, SO PACK YOUR KIT AND BE READY TO MOVE AS SOON AS YOUR POSTING IS CONFIRMED.

SIR!



WORD QUICKLY SPREAD THROUGH THE BATTALION. AND THERE WERE SO MANY WHO WERE PLEASED THAT THE R.S.M.'S IRON GRIP WAS SOON TO BE RELINQUISHED.

I HEAR THEY'RE PUTTING THE OLD WAR-HORSE OUT TO GRASS.

YEAH. HE'S GOING BACK TO BLIGHTY TO NURSE A LOAD OF RECRUITS—LUCKY BEGGARI!



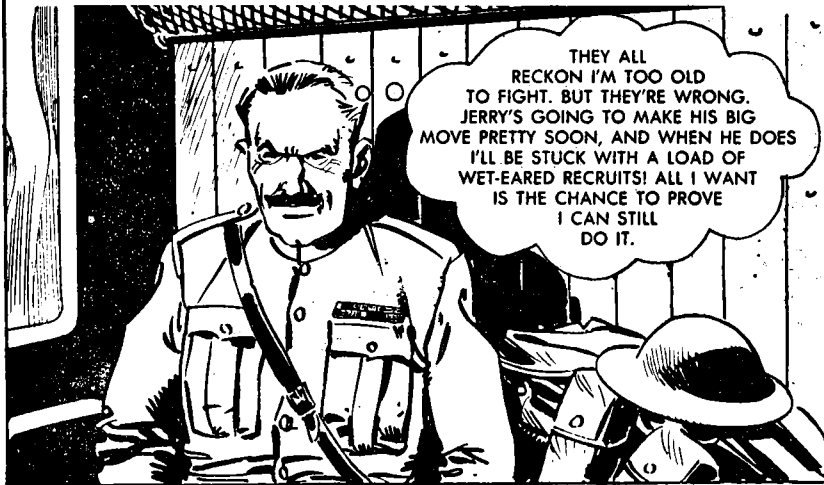
PERCY HAD OVERHEARD EVERY WORD. AND THE REFERENCE TO THE 'OLD WAR-HORSE' WAS THE LAST STRAW.

COUPLE OF COMEDIANS, EH? WELL, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. IT'S ALL A BIG JOKE NOW—BUT WHEN JERRY MAKES HIS MOVE YOU'LL FIND NOTHING TO LAUGH AT.



THREE WEEKS LATER PERCY WAS ON HIS WAY BACK TO ENGLAND. AND AS THE TRAIN RACED THROUGH THE FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE HE WAS LOST IN HIS THOUGHTS . . .

THEY ALL RECKON I'M TOO OLD TO FIGHT. BUT THEY'RE WRONG. JERRY'S GOING TO MAKE HIS BIG MOVE PRETTY SOON, AND WHEN HE DOES I'LL BE STUCK WITH A LOAD OF WET-EARED RECRUITS! ALL I WANT IS THE CHANCE TO PROVE I CAN STILL DO IT.



BUT THAT CHANCE WAS TO COME FAR SOONER THAN PERCY HAD IMAGINED. AT THAT VERY MOMENT THE WAR FINALLY ARRIVED, RIGHT IN HIS LAP, AS THE TRAIN SQUEALED TO A HALT—UNDER THE GUNS OF A FORWARD NAZI UNIT.



PERCY WASN'T THE ONLY BRITISH SOLDIER ON THE TRAIN. THERE WAS ONE OTHER—CORPORAL 'JACKO' JACKSON. AND JACKO WAS QUICK-WITTED ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT HE HAD TO DO SOMETHING—FAST.



MEANWHILE PERCY WAS ABOUT TO INVESTIGATE WHEN HE BUMPED INTO JACKO. THE CORPORAL BREATHLESSLY EXPLAINED WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

THERE'S JERRY ARMoured CARS OUT THERE, SIR! I RECKON THEY'RE LOOKING FOR SOLDIERS. THERE'S A LOAD OF FRENCHIES GOING ON LEAVE BACK THERE—I WAS WITH 'EM...

ALL RIGHT, CORPORAL, KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON. THIS IS NO TIME FOR HYSTERICS. AND GET YOUR RIFLE, LAD...

THIS WAS WHAT PERCY HAD BEEN WAITING FOR, AND THERE WAS A GLEAM IN HIS EYES AS HE LOOKED AT JACKO'S RIFLE.

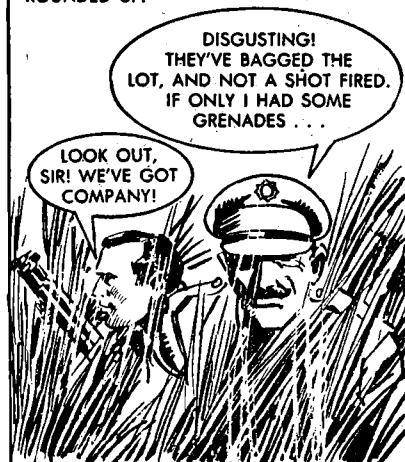
I HOPE THAT THING'S LOADED, CORPORAL. WE'RE GOING TO NEED IT.

FAT LOT OF GOOD IT'LL DO US, SIR. I RECKON WE'LL NEED AN ARTILLERY BARRAGE TO GET OUT OF THIS.

AS THEY SNEAKED OFF THE TRAIN, PERCY REALISED THAT THE ENEMY MUST HAVE LAUNCHED A SURPRISE ATTACK AND BROKEN THROUGH—AND THESE GERMANS WERE A FORWARD COLUMN.



TAKING COVER IN THE LONG GRASS, THEY WATCHED THE FRENCH SOLDIERS BEING ROUNDED UP.



JACKO'S WARNING CAME NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON. QUICKLY HE AND PERCY CRAWLED AWAY . . .



AS THEY MADE THEIR CAUTIOUS WAY THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH, JACKO SPOTTED SOMETHING.

LOOK OVER THERE, SIR. TWO JERRIES HAVING A SMOKE.

POOR DISCIPLINE, CORPORAL, BUT LUCKY FOR US. WE COULD USE THAT BIKE.

SUDDENLY JACKO WAS BEGINNING TO REGRET THAT HE'D EVER MET THIS R.S.M.—SERGEANT-MAJORS HAD ALWAYS SPELLED TROUBLE IN THE PAST, AND THIS ONE WAS NO EXCEPTION.

CAN YOU RIDE A JERRY BIKE, SIR? I'VE NEVER BEEN ON A MOTOR-BIKE IN MY LIFE.

I CAN RIDE A BRITISH ONE. THE GERMAN CHANGE IS DIFFERENT, THAT'S ALL. YOU READY?

THE TWO GERMANS WERE TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE.



THE TWO GERMANS WERE SOON DEALT WITH—AT THE COST OF JACKO'S RIFLE.



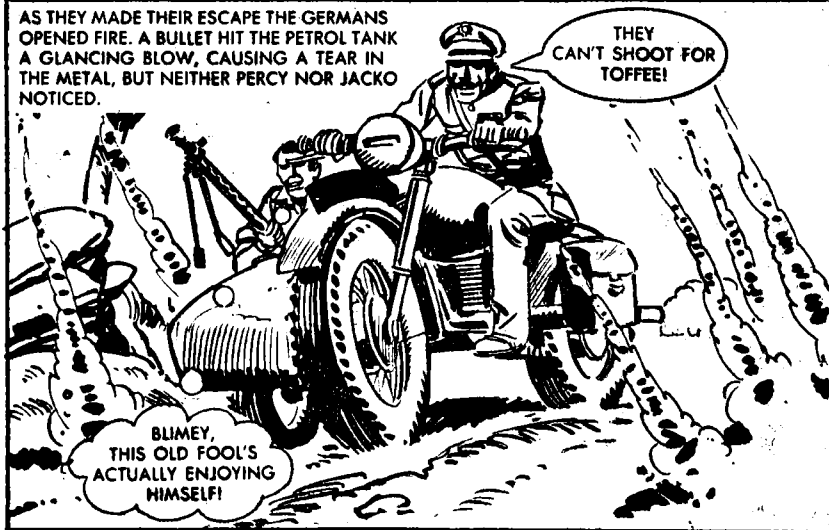
FOR A MOMENT IT LOOKED AS THOUGH PERCY WASN'T GOING TO FIGURE OUT HOW THE BIKE WORKED.

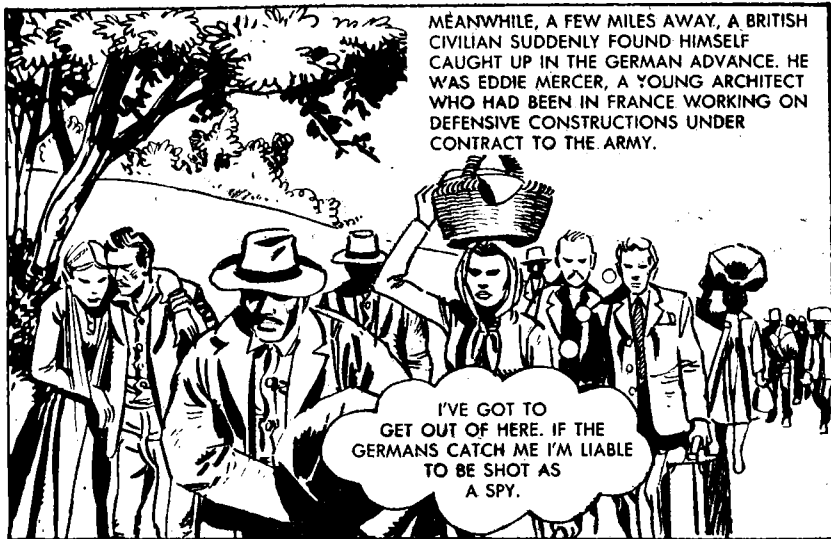


THEN THE ENGINE STARTED WITH A ROAR. THE R.S.M. FLICKED IT INTO GEAR AND OPENED UP THE THROTTLE.

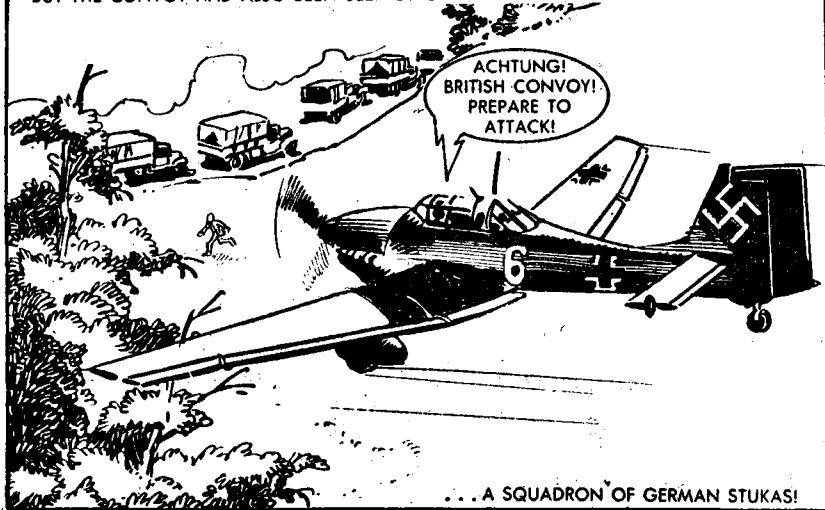


AS THEY MADE THEIR ESCAPE THE GERMANS OPENED FIRE. A BULLET HIT THE PETROL TANK A GLANCING BLOW, CAUSING A TEAR IN THE METAL, BUT NEITHER PERCY NOR JACKO NOTICED.

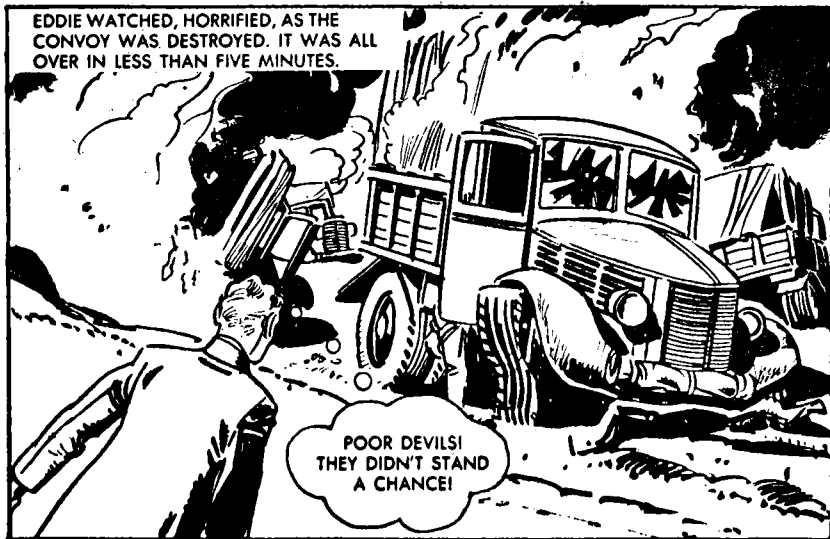




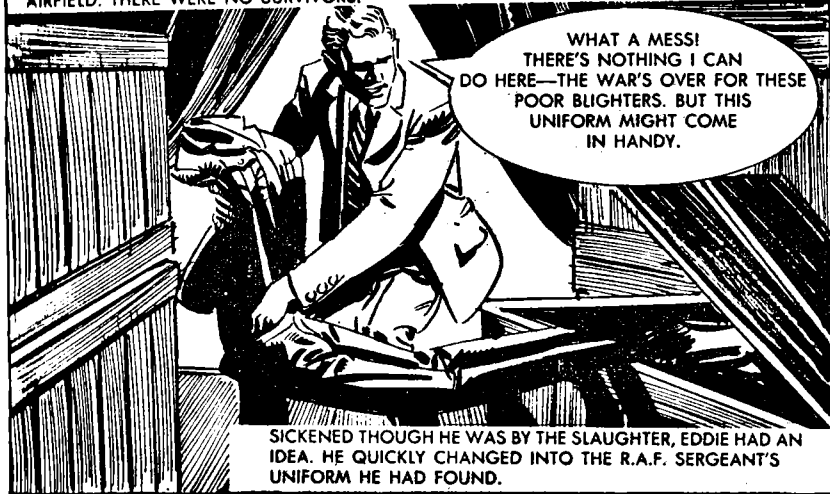
BUT THE CONVOY HAD ALSO BEEN SEEN BY OTHER EYES . . .



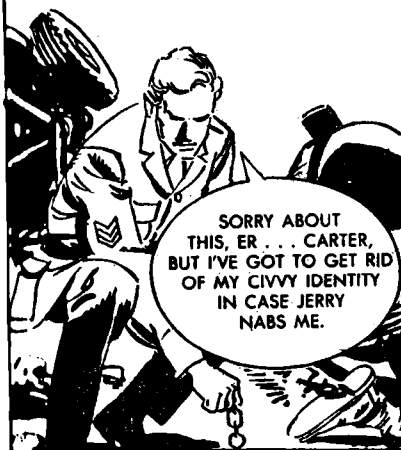
EDDIE WATCHED, HORRIFIED, AS THE CONVOY WAS DESTROYED. IT WAS ALL OVER IN LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES.



THE CONVOY BELONGED TO THE R.A.F. AND IT WAS THE REAR PARTY FROM A NEARBY AIRFIELD. THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS.



SWALLOWING HIS REVULSION HE TOOK
THE IDENTITY DISCS FROM ONE OF THE
DEAD AIRMEN.



EDDIE HAD FACED HIS BAPTISM OF FIRE. AND
TO SAVE HIS OWN SKIN HE'D BEEN FORCED
TO ROB THE DEAD. IF THIS WAS WHAT WAR
MEANT, HE WANTED NO MORE OF IT.



HE HADN'T GONE FAR WHEN HE RAN INTO A GROUP OF BRITISH SOLDIERS. JUMPY AND APPREHENSIVE, THEY RAISED THEIR RIFLES . . .



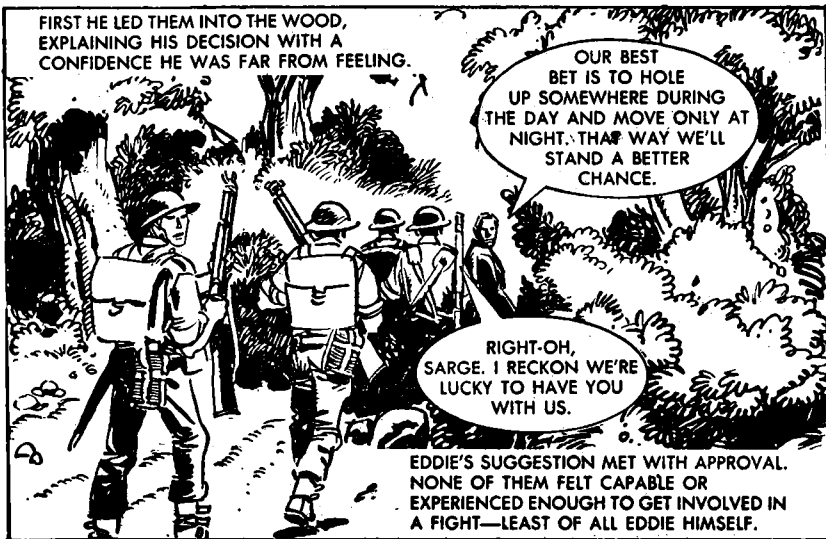
THE SOLDIERS SEEMED PLEASED TO HEAR A BRITISH VOICE. LIKE EDDIE, THEY TOO HAD BEEN CUT OFF BY THE GERMAN ADVANCE.



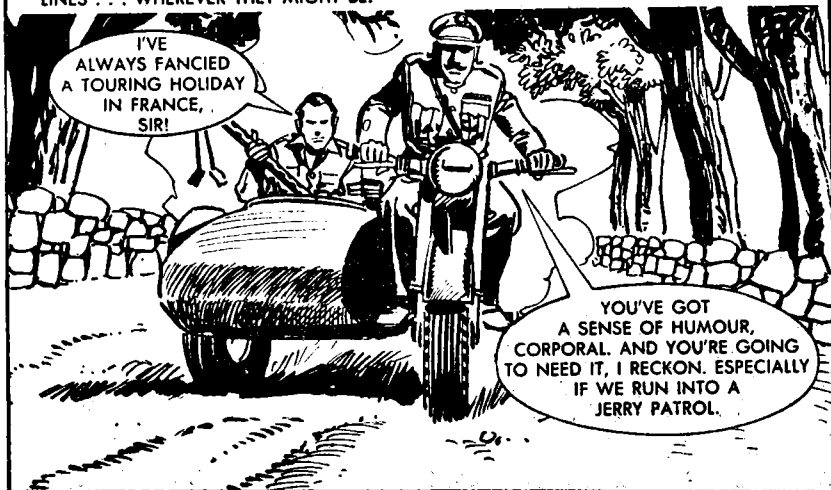
EDDIE KNEW THEY WERE LOOKING TO HIM FOR LEADERSHIP—ONLY HE DIDN'T FEEL CAPABLE OF HELPING THEM. IF HE TOLD THEM WHO HE REALLY WAS AND THEY GOT CAUGHT, IT MIGHT SLIP OUT. SO HE DECIDED TO PLAY ALONG AND PRETEND HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING. HE TOOK A DEEP BREATH—



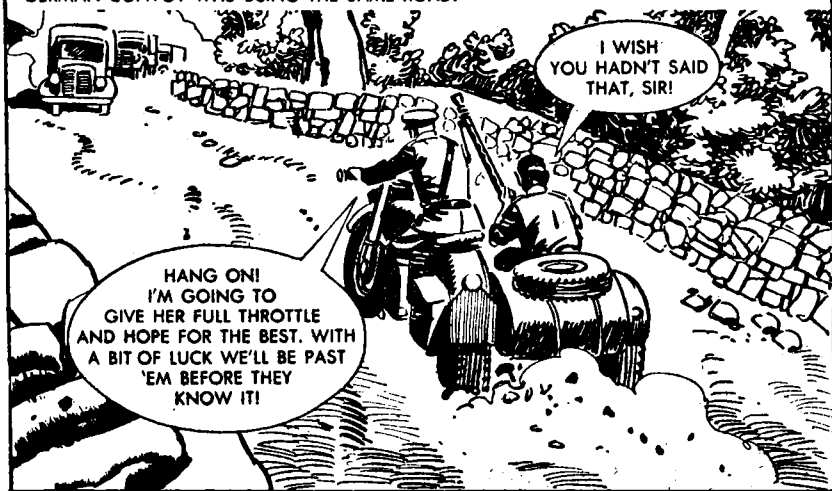
FIRST HE LED THEM INTO THE WOOD, EXPLAINING HIS DECISION WITH A CONFIDENCE HE WAS FAR FROM FEELING.



MEANWHILE PERCY AND JACKO WERE ALSO MAKING THEIR WAY BACK TO THE BRITISH LINES . . . WHEREVER THEY MIGHT BE.



NO SOONER HAD THE R.S.M. SPOKEN THAN THEY RAN STRAIGHT INTO BIG TROUBLE. A GERMAN CONVOY WAS USING THE SAME ROAD.



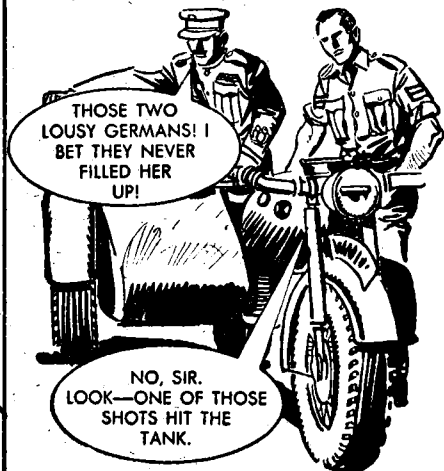
THE GERMANS DIDN'T SEEM TO NOTICE THEM—
PERHAPS THEY WERE TAKEN IN BY THE BIKE.
BUT WHATEVER THE REASON, JACKO WAS PAST
ALL CARING AS HE HUNG ON FOR GRIM LIFE.



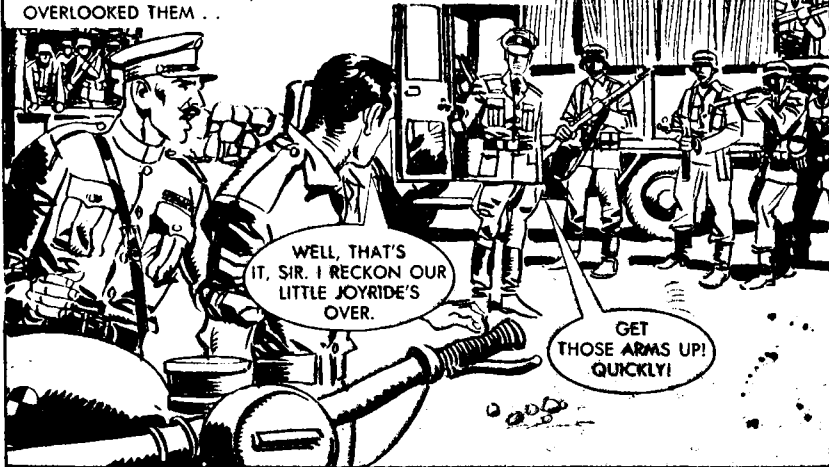
BUT THEN THEIR LUCK RAN OUT.
SUDDENLY THE BIKE BEGAN TO
SPLUTTER . . .



THE R.S.M. FELT A SURGE OF RAGE AND
ANGER. THEY'D ALMOST MADE IT . . .



A SUDDEN CLICK OF RIFLE BOLTS MADE THEM TURN. IN THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT THEY'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE GERMANS. THE GERMANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HADN'T OVERLOOKED THEM . . .



THAT NIGHT PERCY AND JACKO ARRIVED AT A SMALL VILLAGE SCHOOL. IT HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A P.O.W. CAMP—HASTILY, IT SEEMED. AND THE R.S.M. WASN'T IMPRESSED.



PERCY AND JACKO WERE TAKEN TO ONE OF THE CLASSROOMS WHICH SERVED AS A CELL AND ROUGHLY THRUST INSIDE.

IN THERE! THIS
WILL BE YOUR HOME
FOR THE TIME BEING,
ENGLANDER!

HEY! JUST
WATCH WHO YOU'RE
PUSHING AROUND,
MATE!

IT LOOKS
AS THOUGH WE'RE
NOT THE ONLY ONES,
CORPORAL.

AND SO THEY FOUND EDDIE
MERCER AND HIS PARTY.

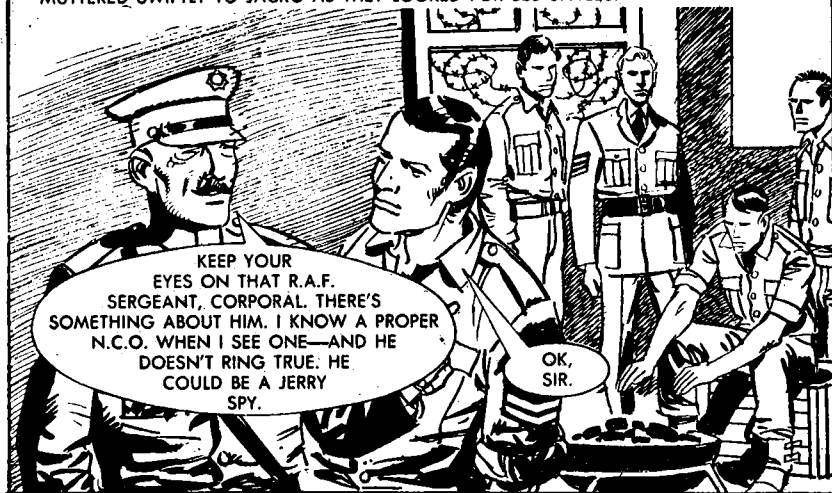
A DEJECTED EDDIE EXPLAINED
WHAT HAD HAPPENED . . .

WE WERE
PICKED UP BY A
GERMAN PATROL A FEW MILES
AWAY. JUST OUR ROTTEN
LUCK, I RECKON.

THE SERGEANT
HERE WAS TRYING TO
HELP US GET BACK TO
OUR OWN LINES,
SIR.



THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT EDDIE THAT AROUSED THE R.S.M.'s SUSPICIONS. HE MUTTERED SWIFTLY TO JACKO AS THEY LOOKED FOR BED-SPACES.



THE NEXT MORNING PERCY AND JACKO WERE TAKEN TO SEE THE COMMANDANT.



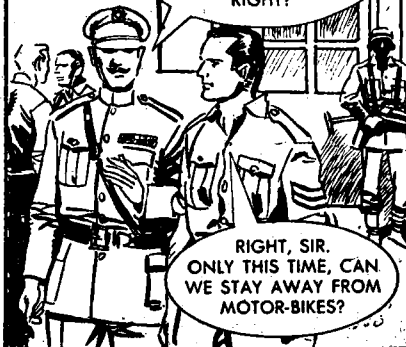
MAJOR VON KLAUSWITZ SMILED.

PERHAPS . . .
AS YOU SEE, MOST
PRISONERS HERE ARE FRENCH.
THEY WILL REMAIN, BUT YOU BRITISH
WILL GO TO GERMANY AS
SOON AS I CAN
ARRANGE IT.



BUT PERCY HAD OTHER IDEAS ABOUT
THEIR FUTURE. AS THEY WALKED BACK TO
THE CLASSROOM—

I'M NOT
SITTING OUT THE
WAR IN GERMANY. FIRST
CHANCE WE GET, WE MAKE
A RUN FOR IT,
RIGHT?



RIGHT, SIR.
ONLY THIS TIME, CAN
WE STAY AWAY FROM
MOTOR-BIKES?

BUT FIRST THEY HAD TO FIND OUT WHO EDDIE REALLY WAS. IT WAS NO GREAT EFFORT TO
COLLAR HIM IN THE WASHROOM.



URRGHH!

DON'T
STRUGGLE, MATE.
JUST ANSWER THE SERGEANT-
MAJOR'S QUESTIONS. AND THE TRUTH,
OR I'LL BREAK YOUR
NECK!

I DON'T
KNOW WHO YOU ARE,
EDDIE, BUT I'LL BET YOU'RE
NO N.C.O. IN FACT I RECKON YOU'RE NOT
EVEN IN THE BOY SCOUTS,
LET ALONE THE
R.A.F.!

EDDIE DECIDED TO TELL THEM WHO HE WAS. HE HAD LITTLE CHOICE ANYWAY, SINCE JACKO LOOKED READY TO DO HIM IN.

... SO I RECKONED I'D STAND MORE CHANCE IN UNIFORM. IF THE GERMANS FOUND OUT WHO I WAS, I'D HAVE ENDED UP IN FRONT OF A FIRING-SQUAD!

WE CAN'T LET JERRY FIND OUT, THAT'S TRUE ENOUGH. SO UNTIL WE CAN GET YOU BACK TO OUR LINES YOU'RE AN R.A.F. SERGEANT— AND I'LL MAKE SURE YOU ACT LIKE ONE!

BUT THE NEXT MORNING THERE WAS A NEWCOMER PRESENT—AN S.S. OFFICER FROM THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT.

LOOK— THAT AIR FORCE MAN. HE IS NOT IN STEP. ODD . . .

MERCER STICKS OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB . . .

IT WASN'T EDDIE'S FAULT—HE'D NEVER MARCHED IN HIS LIFE. AND NOW IT LOOKED AS IF HE WOULD NEVER GET THE CHANCE TO LEARN.

YOUR IDENTITY CARD, SERGEANT.

NOW HE'S FOR IT.

EDDIE'S MIND WAS RACING. HE HAD TO BLUFF HIS WAY OUT OF THIS AND HOPE HIS STORY HELD UP. QUICKLY HE PRODUCED HIS IDENTITY DISCS.



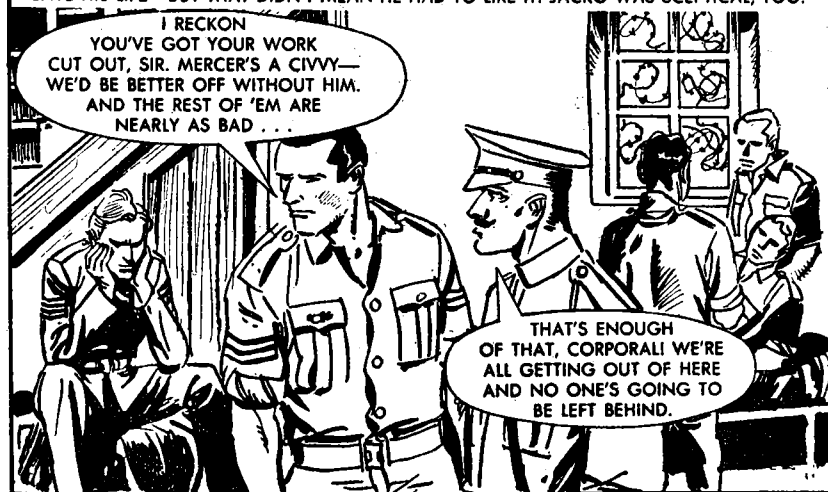
AT THAT MOMENT PERCY CAME TO THE RESCUE.

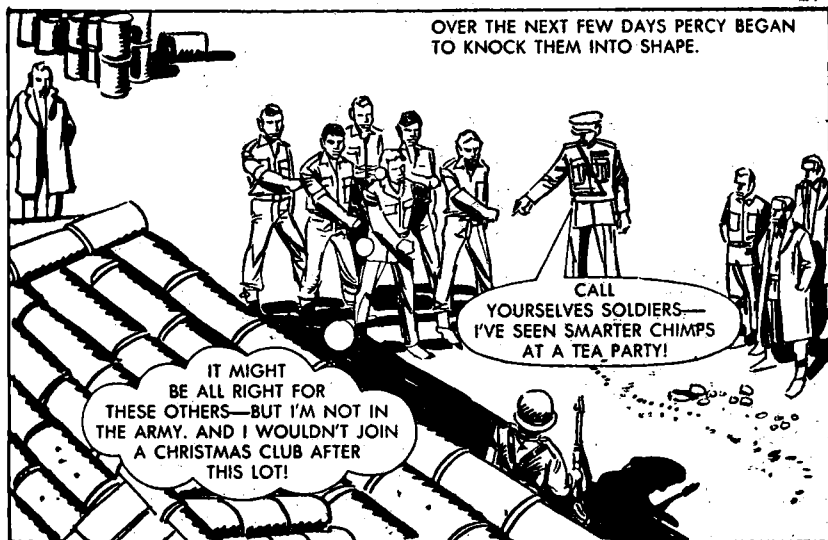


MAJOR VON KLAUSWITZ WAS SATISFIED. HE WAS A PRUSSIAN WHO UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR IRON DISCIPLINE—AND HE HAD NO LOVE FOR THE AIR FORCE. BUT THE S.S. OFFICER WAS NOT SO HAPPY. HE WATCHED THOUGHTFULLY AS PERCY MARCHED HIS MEN AWAY.



EDDIE REALISED THAT HE WAS IN FOR A CRASH COURSE IN MILITARY TRAINING. IT MIGHT SAVE HIS LIFE—BUT THAT DIDN'T MEAN HE HAD TO LIKE IT. JACKO WAS SCEPTICAL, TOO.





TO MAJOR VON KLAUSWITZ THE R.S.M. POSED NO THREAT. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY MORE INTERESTED IN SPIT AND POLISH THAN IN TRYING TO ESCAPE.



SOON THE SCHOOL BEGAN TO GLEAM WITH FRESH PAINT, MUCH TO THE AMUSEMENT OF THE FRENCH PRISONERS.



BUT NEITHER THE GERMANS OR THE FRENCH SUSPECTED THAT PERCY WAS PLAYING A MUCH DEADLIER GAME. AND IT INVOLVED HAVING EVERYONE FIGHTING FIT, EVEN THE RELUCTANT EDDIE MERCER.



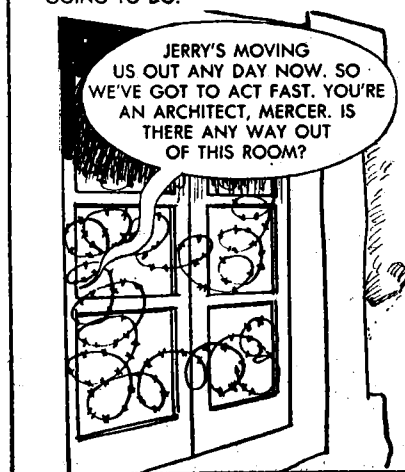
USING A PAINT-BRUSH SUPPLIED BY THE COMMANDANT, THE R.S.M. WAS MAKING A DUMMY PISTOL. EDDIE COULDN'T BELIEVE THEY WERE SERIOUS.



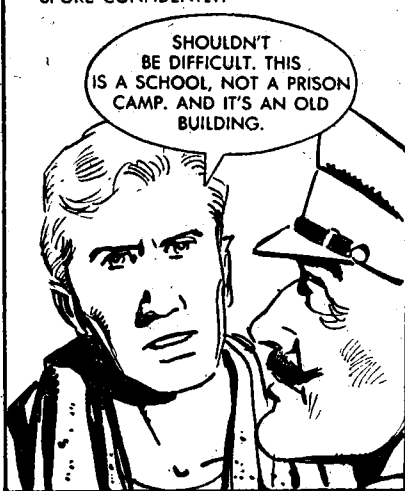
THEY WOULD HAVE COME TO BLOWS IF PERCY HADN'T STEPPED IN, HIS VOICE SHAKING WITH RAGE.



TEMPERS SLOWLY COOLED DOWN AS PERCY EXPLAINED WHAT THEY WERE GOING TO DO.



ON FAMILIAR GROUND, EDDIE SPOKE CONFIDENTLY.



FDDIE WAS RIGHT. THE BUILDING THEY WERE IN HADN'T BEEN INTENDED TO KEEP PEOPLE INSIDE. AS NIGHT FELL, HE FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR.

THIS IS IT—
THE WAY OUT. IF WE
GET UP INSIDE THE LOFT
WE CAN CLIMB ONTO
THE ROOF.

RIGHT, YOU
LOT. UP WE GO BEFORE
THE GUARDS DO THEIR
NEXT BED
CHECK.

LET'S HOPE
WE'VE TIMED 'EM
RIGHT.

IT DIDN'T TAKE THEM LONG TO GET ON THE ROOF AFTER PERCY HAD MADE THEM BLACK THEIR FACES WITH SOOT FROM THE STOVE.

I KNOW IT'S
ALL A BIT SHORT NOTICE—
BUT BY MORNING THEY COULD
HAVE BEEN READY TO TRANSPORT
US. THIS WAY WE'RE STILL
NEAR THE FRONT
LINES.

DON'T WORRY,
SIR. THIS TIME WE'LL
MAKE IT.

SAFELY ON THE GROUND ONCE MORE, THEY SPOTTED A LONE GERMAN SENTRY.

WE COULD DO WITH HIS RIFLE. USE THAT TOY PISTOL ON HIM.

OK, SIR.



BEFORE THE GERMAN KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING, THEY HAD POUNCED.

ONE PEEP OUT OF YOU, FRITZ, AND IT'LL BE YOUR LAST.

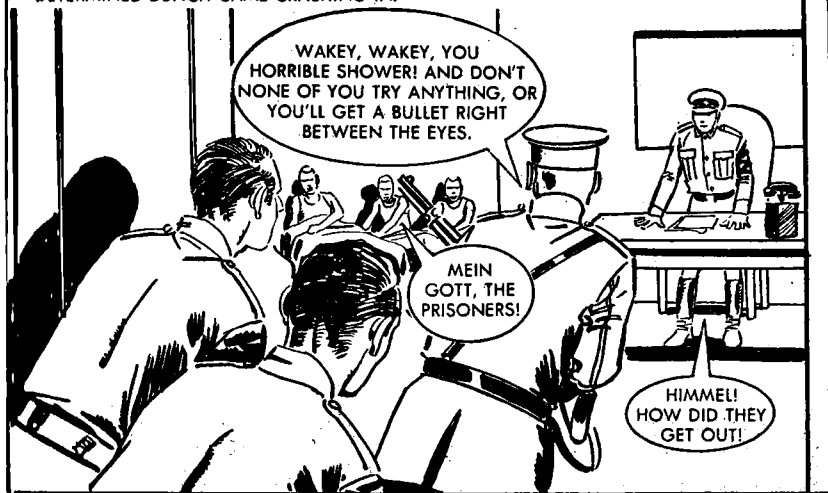


SWIFTLY THEY MADE FOR THE GUARDROOM. A QUICK GLANCE SHOWED THE GERMANS HAD APPARENTLY BEEN LULLED INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY—EXACTLY WHAT THE R.S.M. HAD HOPED.

THEY'RE ASLEEP IN THERE—MUST BE THE ONES WAITING TO GO ON STAG. WE'LL USE THE BACK DOOR AND SURPRISE 'EM.



THE DROWSY GERMANS COULDN'T BELIEVE THEIR EYES WHEN THE GRIMLY-DETERMINED BUNCH CAME CRASHING IN.



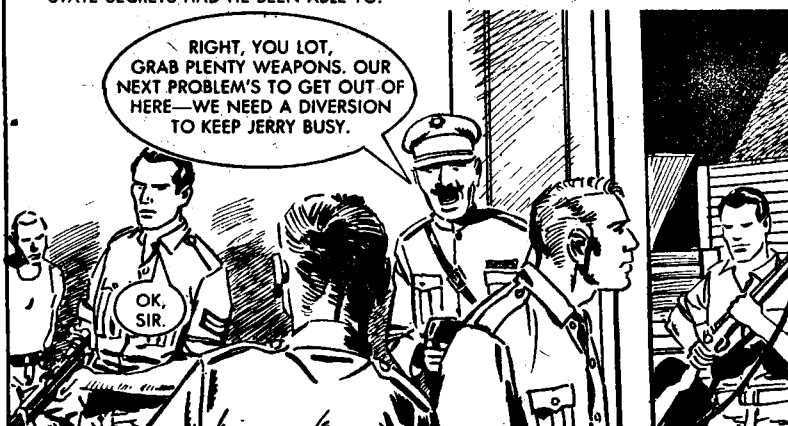
THE GUARDS WERE QUICKLY TIED UP. MEANWHILE PERCY HAD TAKEN A BAYONET AND HE SWIFTLY CUT THE TELEPHONE WIRE AS HE BARKED A QUESTION AT THE GERMAN IN CHARGE.



PERCY WASN'T IN THE MOOD TO WASTE TIME. HE HELD THE BAYONET UP AND SPOKE SOFTLY—AND THE GERMAN'S EYES BULGED WITH FEAR.



AFTER THAT, GETTING THE ARMOURY KEY WAS NO PROBLEM. THE GERMAN GUARD COMMANDER WAS SO FRIGHTENED THAT HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN PERCY THE REICH'S STATE SECRETS HAD HE BEEN ABLE TO.



AND WHAT BETTER DIVERSION THAN BLOWING UP THE ARMOURY ITSELF ONCE THEY WERE ALL SUITABLY ARMED?

IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER TO TIME THE EXPLOSION WITH THE RELEASE OF THE FRENCH PRISONERS AS PERCY MADE USE OF THE KEYS TAKEN FROM THE GUARDROOM.



TASTING FREEDOM, THE FRENCHMEN FOUGHT LIKE WILDCATS. THE OUTNUMBERED GERMAN GUARDS HADN'T A CHANCE.



AND MEANWHILE THE BRITISH WERE RACING AWAY. ONLY THE PERIMETER FENCE BARRED THE WAY NOW, AND JACKO HAD THE ANSWER TO THAT.



THE GRENADE DID EXACTLY THAT, AND AS PERCY AND THE OTHERS MADE THEIR ESCAPE, MAJOR VON KLAUSWITZ WAS TRYING TO PREVENT THE REST OF THE PRISONERS FROM JOINING THEM, BUT WITH LITTLE SUCCESS. HIS SECURITY OFFICER WASN'T TOO HAPPY EITHER—



AS THE ESCAPING BRITISH PAUSED TO LOOK BACK, PERCY FELT A GLOW OF SATISFACTION. THERE WAS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO, BUT AT LEAST THEY'D WON THE FIRST ROUND. NEXT TIME HE KNEW THE GERMANS WOULD TAKE HIM MORE SERIOUSLY.

THAT SHOULD KEEP THEM BUSY FOR A WHILE. IT'LL TEACH 'EM NOT TO MESS ABOUT WITH REGIMENTAL SERGEANT-MAJOR PERCY LANSDALE!

YEAH! ONLY WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

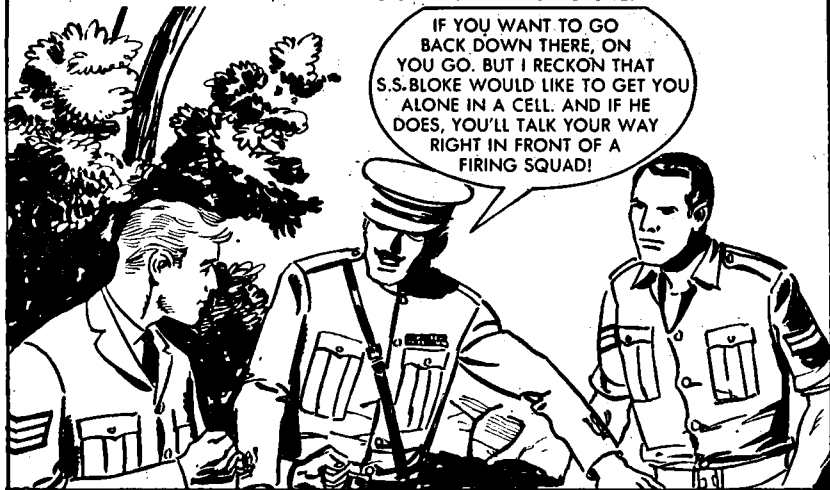
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN, MERCER? WE GET OUT OF HERE, THAT'S WHAT WE DO!

EDDIE THOUGHT IT WAS TIME HE VOICED HIS OPINION. HE WAS FREE, SO HE COULD STOP PRETENDING HE WAS A SOLDIER.

HOW DO WE GET BACK TO OUR LINES, MISTER SERGEANT-MAJOR? BY MORNING, EVERY GERMAN IN FRANCE WILL BE LOOKING FOR US!

I'VE JUST ABOUT HAD ENOUGH OF THIS BLOKE. WE SAVE HIS SKIN AND ALL HE CAN DO IS MOAN.

IT WAS THE SECOND TIME THAT PERCY PREVENTED THE TWO MEN FROM COMING TO BLOWS, AND HIS VOICE WAS VERY SARCASTIC.



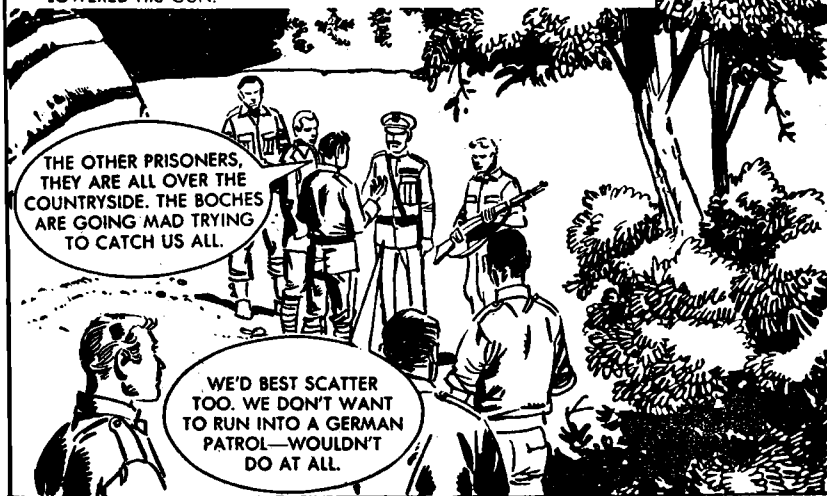
PERCY WAS RIGHT AND EDDIE KNEW IT.



AT THAT MOMENT TWO MEN EMERGED FROM THE BUSHES. JACKO WHIRLED, HIS LOOTED SCHMEISSER READY TO CUT BOTH DOWN—



THE TWO MEN WERE ESCAPED FRENCH PRISONERS. WARILY JACKO LOWERED HIS GUN.



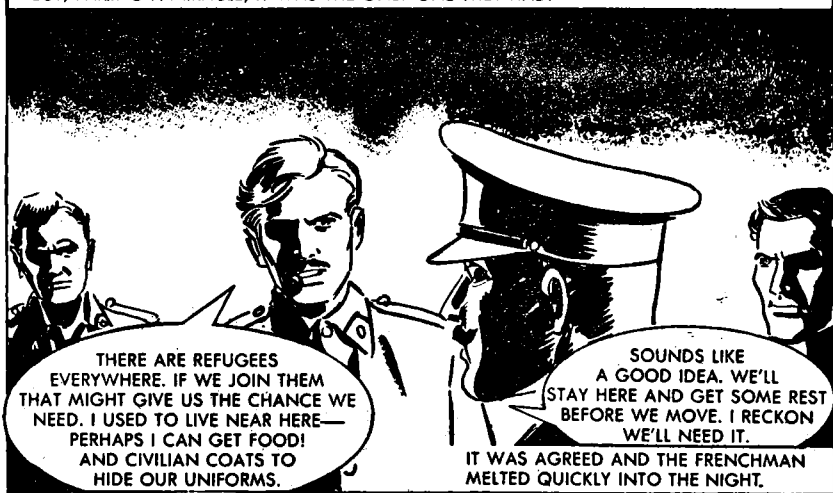
GUIDED BY THE FRENCHMEN THEY MADE OFF INTO THE NIGHT. SUDDENLY JACKO SPOTTED OMINOUS FLASHES ON THE HORIZON.



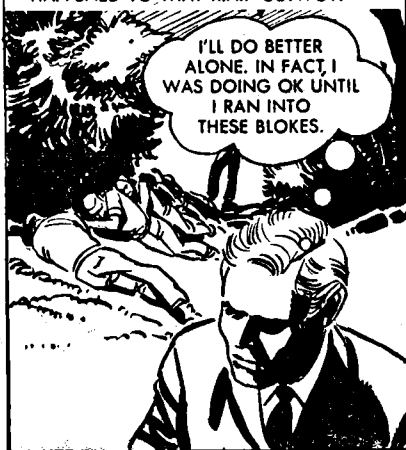
THEY ALL FELT IT—A THRILL OF EXCITEMENT. BUT THE R.S.M.'S NEXT WORDS BROUGHT THEM ALL BACK TO EARTH.



ALL EYES TURNED TO THE FRENCHMAN AS HE EXPLAINED HIS PLAN. IT WAS A SLIM ONE— BUT, FAILING A MIRACLE, IT WAS THE ONLY ONE THEY HAD.



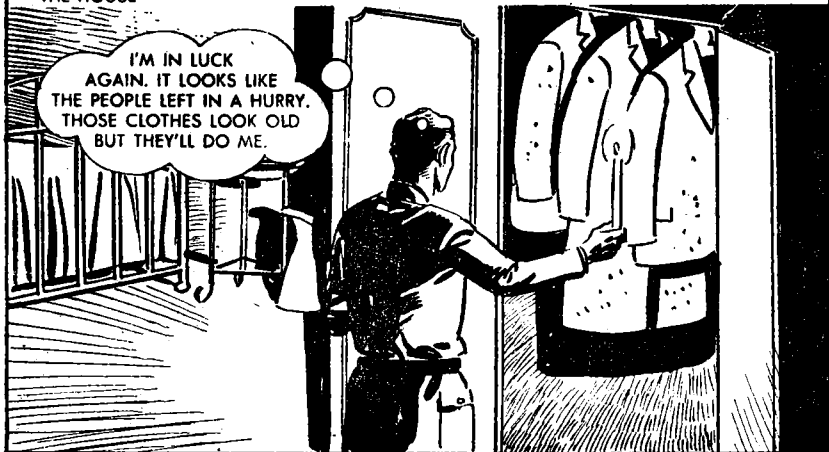
BUT EDDIE HAD OTHER IDEAS. WAITING UNTIL THEY WERE ASLEEP HE SNEAKED AWAY. HE REMEMBERED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THAT R.A.F. CONVOY.



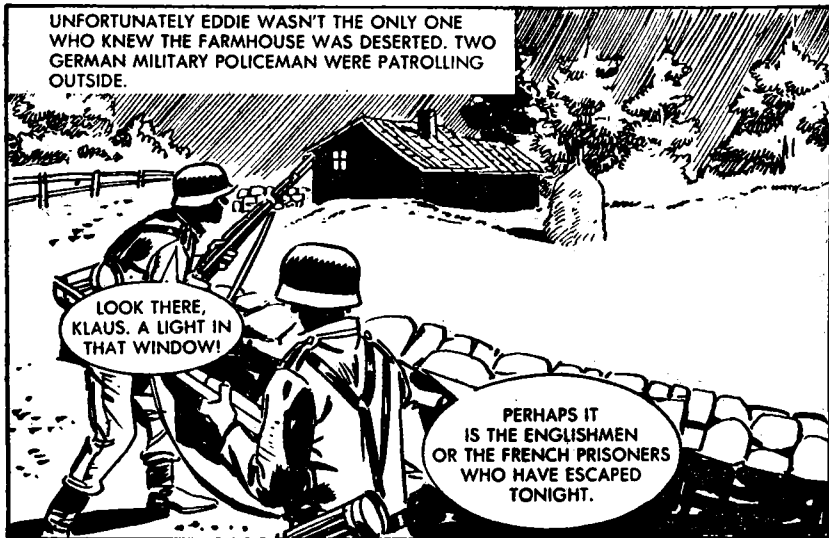
EDDIE FOUND A DESERTED FARMHOUSE— ONE OF MANY IN THE AREA. ITS OCCUPANTS HAD LONG SINCE FLED BEFORE THE VICTORIOUS GERMAN ARMY.



HE FOUND SOME STALE BREAD AND CHEESE—HARDLY A FEAST, BUT IT FILLED A SPACE. HIS NEXT PROBLEM WAS TO DISGUISE HIMSELF, AS HE'D HAD ENOUGH OF THE R.A.F. UNIFORM. BY THE LIGHT OF A FLICKERING CANDLE HE LIT IN THE KITCHEN, HE SEARCHED THE HOUSE—



UNFORTUNATELY EDDIE WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW THE FARMHOUSE WAS DESERTED. TWO GERMAN MILITARY POLICEMEN WERE PATROLLING OUTSIDE.



THE NAZIS HURRIEDLY MADE THEIR PLANS. THEY COULD SMELL PROMOTION IN THE AIR.



YOU GET BACK TO H.Q. AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN. I WILL STAY AND WATCH THE HOUSE. IF THEY MOVE I WILL FOLLOW THEM.

RIGHT, I WON'T BE LONG.

TAKING SOME VEGETABLES HE HAD FOUND, EDDIE SET OFF. DAWN WAS ONLY AN HOUR AWAY AND HE WANTED TO REACH COVER BEFORE DAYLIGHT. BUT AS HE STRODE ACROSS THE FIELD, A SEARCHLIGHT CLICKED ON, CATCHING HIM FULL IN ITS BEAM.



CRIPES, I'VE BEEN SPOTTED!

HALT!

IT WAS ONLY TOO TRUE. HIS PREPARATIONS HAD GIVEN THE GERMANS PLENTY OF TIME TO SET UP AN AMBUSH.

EDDIE PANICKED—HE HAD TO GET AWAY. IF THEY CAUGHT HIM, THIS TIME HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FOOL THEM INTO THINKING HE WAS IN THE R.A.F. AND AS HE RAN, THE FIRST SHOTS CRACKED PAST HIM.

HE'S TRYING TO GET AWAY! FIRE!

DON'T KILL HIM! HE WILL BE NEEDED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS!

FEAR LEANT WINGS TO EDDIE'S FEET. HE WAS SURE THAT HE'D OUTFRAN THEM WHEN...



I'VE MADE IT... AAH!

... HE TUMBLED HEAD OVER HEELS DOWN INTO A SUNKEN ROADWAY.

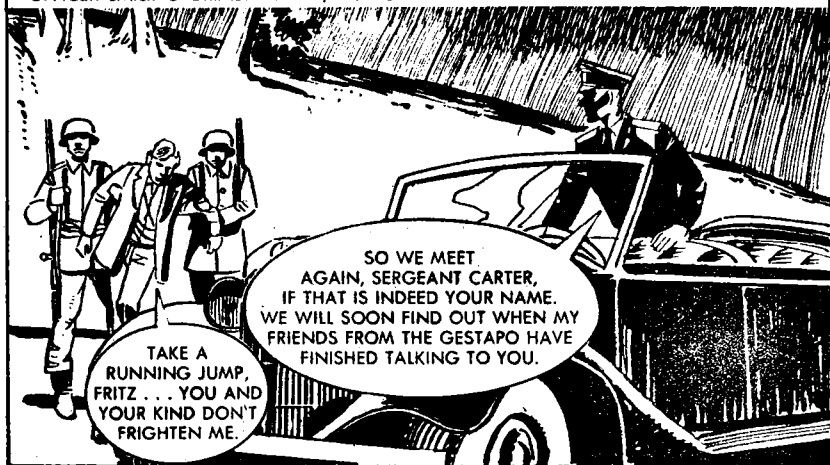
AS HE STRUGGLED TO SIT UP IN THE ROAD WITH PAIN SHOOTING THROUGH HIS ANKLE, EDDIE KNEW THAT IT WAS ALL OVER.



MY ANKLE! I MUST HAVE TWISTED IT!

AND RACING DOWN THE ROAD WAS A VEHICLE WHICH COULD ONLY BE GERMAN.

THE CAR STOPPED AND EDDIE FOUGHT BACK THE PAIN FROM HIS SWOLLEN ANKLE AS HE WAS DRAGGED TO IT, AND HIS BLOOD RAN COLD AS HE SAW THE S.S. CAMP SECURITY OFFICER SMILING GRIMLY AT HIM, HIS VOICE SOFT BUT MENACING.



ANNOYED BY EDDIE'S DEFIANCE THE S.S. OFFICER LASHED OUT. BUT EDDIE'S EXPRESSION REMAINED THE SAME—A MASK OF FURY DIRECTED AGAINST HIS GERMAN CAPTORS.



ALTHOUGH EDDIE WASN'T SHORT ON COURAGE, HE WAS VERY WORRIED. HE'D HEARD ABOUT THE GESTAPO AND HE WONDERED HOW HE WOULD STAND UP TO THE QUESTIONING.

HE WAS BUNDLED INTO THE CAR AND DRIVEN AWAY. DAWN HAD BROKEN WHEN THE CAR SLOWED, OBSTRUCTED BY CROWDS OF PEOPLE STREAMING ALONG THE ROAD.



THE S.S. OFFICER REALISED THAT THE LONGER THEY WERE DELAYED, THE GREATER THE CHANCE OF EDDIE'S FRIENDS GETTING AWAY. HE REACTED TRUE TO FORM.



PERCY AND THE OTHERS WERE ALSO CAUGHT UP IN THE FLOOD OF REFUGEES, BUT THEY WERE USING THEM TO COVER THEIR ESCAPE WITH THE HELP OF CIVILIAN CLOTHES AND A WHEEZING OLD TRUCK WHICH THEIR FRENCH COMPANIONS HAD MANAGED TO ACQUIRE FOR THEM.



THAT S.S. BLOKE'S GOT HIM. THE YOUNG FOOL! HE'S FOR IT UNLESS WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

LOOK IN THAT CAR, SIR — IT'S MERCER! I DIDN'T RECKON HE'D GET VERY FAR.

JACKO COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT THE R.S.M. WAS SERIOUS, NOT AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE EDDIE HAD CAUSED.

BUT HE WALKED OUT ON US! IT'S HIS OWN FAULT HE'S GOT CAUGHT. I SAY IT'S EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF.

NO ARGUMENT, CORPORAL, I'M STILL IN CHARGE. I'VE NEVER LEFT ANYONE BEHIND BEFORE AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO START NOW. MERCER MIGHT BE A CIVVY FOOL, BUT HE'S STILL OUR RESPONSIBILITY!



AS THE TWO VEHICLES DREW ALONGSIDE EACH OTHER, AN ASSORTMENT OF WEAPONS APPEARED AS IF BY MAGIC.



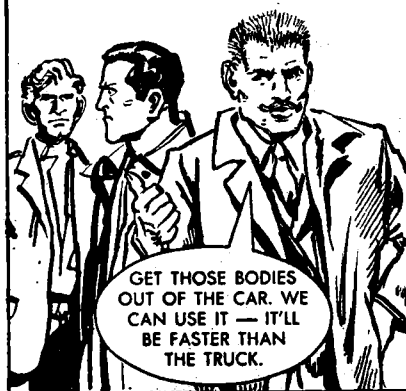
IT WAS ALL OVER IN SECONDS. CAUGHT IN A DEADLY HAIL OF BULLETS, THE GERMANS FELL. EDDIE HAD PRUDENTLY BALED OUT.



THE SKIRMISH OVER, JACKO'S RAGE REACHED BOILING POINT. THE NOISE OF THE SHOOTING MUST HAVE ALERTED THE GERMANS AND THEIR PLAN TO SNEAK AWAY QUIETLY HAD FAILED . . . AND IT WAS ALL MERCER'S FAULT.



PERCY THOUGHT FAST. THEY WERE STILL SURROUNDED BY REFUGEES. IF THE GERMANS HAD HEARD, IT WOULD TAKE THEM SOME TIME TO REACH THE CAR.



THERE WAS SMOKE IN THE DISTANCE — THE FRONT-LINE. AND IT LOOKED TANTALISINGLY CLOSE.



PERCY WOULDN'T HEAR OF IT. THEY WOULD ALL MAKE IT — NO ONE WAS GOING TO BE LEFT BEHIND. BUT THE FRENCHMEN WERE ADAMANT.

WE CAN DO MORE HERE BEHIND THE NAZI LINES. WE HAVE LOST THE FIRST BATTLE, BUT THIS IS NOT THE END.

THAT WILL BE ENOUGH. GO NOW WITH OUR BEST WISHES.

WELL, I CAN'T FORCE YOU, BUT WE'LL LEAVE YOU OUR SPARE AMMO. YOU'LL NEED IT MORE THAN WE WILL.

THEY SAID THEIR FAREWELLS TO THE GALLANT FRENCHMEN THEN ALL PILED INTO THE CAR. IT WAS A TIGHT FIT, BUT PERCY WASN'T GOING TO LEAVE ANYONE ELSE BEHIND.

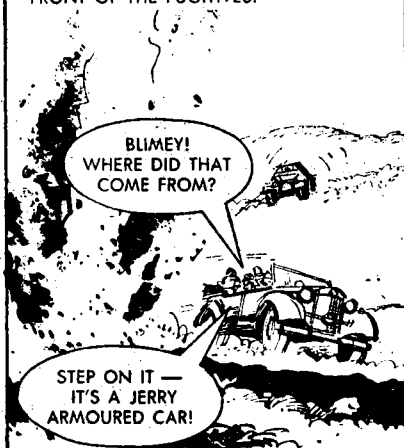
IT'LL GET US THERE, EVEN IF WE HAVE TO CARRY IT!

I JUST HOPE THERE'S ENOUGH JUICE, SIR. REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME?

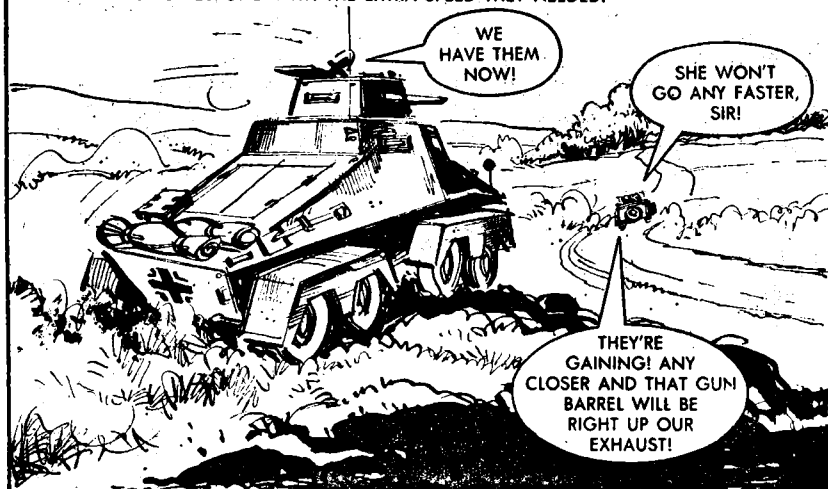
JUST WHEN IT LOOKED AS THOUGH THEY WERE GOING TO MAKE IT, THEY WERE SPOTTED. AS THEY'D FEARED, THE GERMANS HAD BEEN ALERTED BY THE SHOOTING.



THE GERMAN WHO HAD SPOTTED THEM LEAPT BACK INTO HIS ARMoured CAR, AND SUDDENLY A SHELL EXPLODED IN FRONT OF THE FUGITIVES.



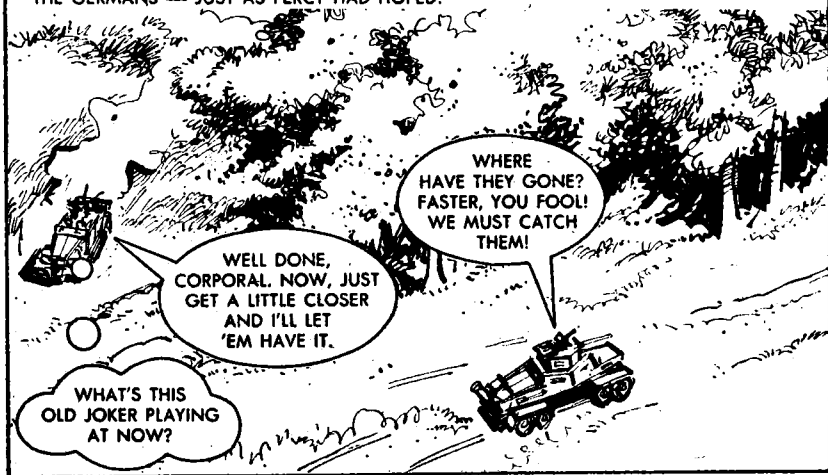
JACKO PUT HIS FOOT DOWN, BUT WITH THE ADDED WEIGHT THE ENGINE WAS UNABLE TO RESPOND WITH THE EXTRA SPEED THEY NEEDED.



THEY WERE APPROACHING A GROUP OF TREES AND THE R.S.M. HAD AN IDEA. IT WAS A SLIM CHANCE, BUT THE ONLY ONE THEY HAD.



THE STAFF CAR SKIDDED ROUND THE TREES AND THE ARMOURD CAR FOLLOWED. AND NOW THE BRITISH CAME ROUND IN A CIRCLE WHICH BROUGHT THEM ONTO THE TAIL OF THE GERMANS — JUST AS PERCY HAD HOPED.

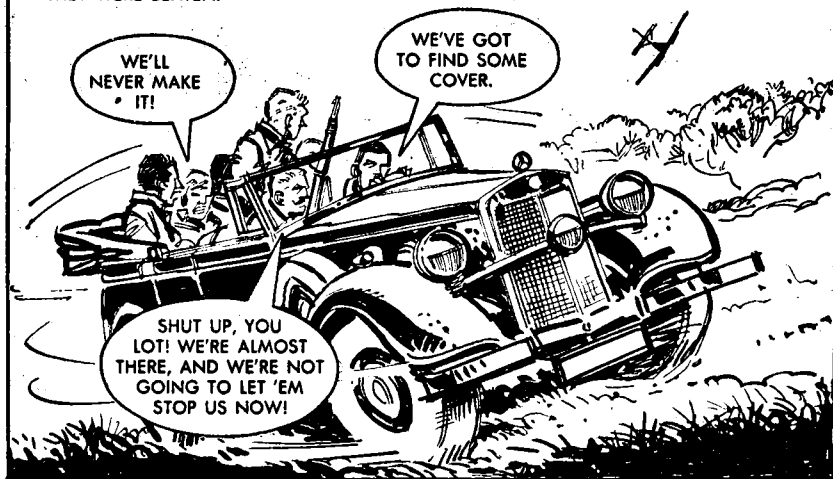




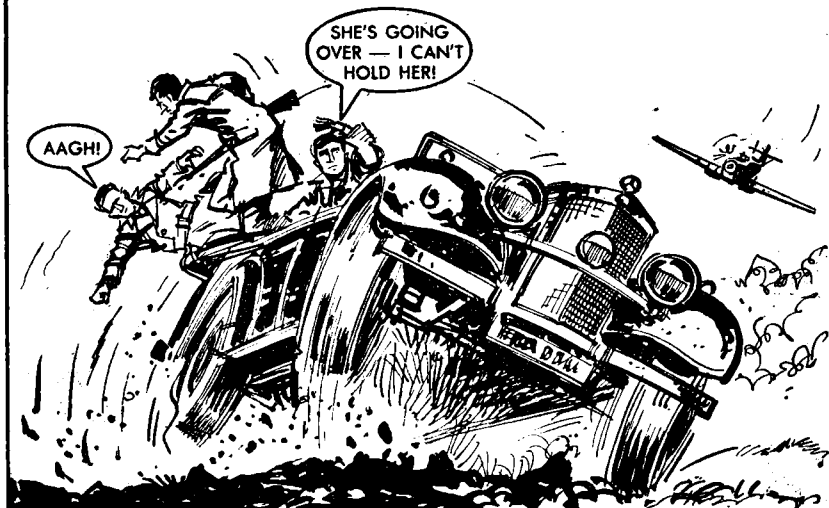
THE FIGHTER TURNED ALMOST LAZILY, THEN SWOOPED DOWN VICIOUSLY TO ATTACK.



THEY WERE SO CLOSE, BUT NOW, AFTER ALL THEY'D BEEN THROUGH, IT LOOKED AS IF THEY WERE BEATEN.



THEY WERE OUT IN THE OPEN AND IT WAS ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME BEFORE THE CAR WAS HIT. AND THAT TIME SOON CAME AS A BULLET TORE INTO THE REAR TYRE. JACKO FELT THE WHEEL BUCK IN HIS HANDS, THEN —



AS THE FIGHTER TURNED FOR ANOTHER RUN, PERCY BELLOWED. THEY WERE ALMOST THERE — HE COULD SEE BRITISH TANKS IN THE DISTANCE.



EDDIE'S ANKLE HURT, AND IT LOOKED A LONG WAY TO THOSE TREES. HE FELL BEHIND, BUT DAVE FISHER TURNED BACK...



BUT EDDIE WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS HAVING TROUBLE KEEPING UP. FOR THE R.S.M. HAD SUDDENLY REALISED THAT HE WAS NO LONGER AS YOUNG AS HE THOUGHT. AND IT OCCURRED TO HIM THAT THIS WAS ONE WAR TOO MANY.

THE C.O. WAS RIGHT — HE WANTED TO SHIP ME HOME BECAUSE HE RECKONED I WAS PAST IT. I'LL NEVER BEAT THAT PLANE TO THE TREES.



PERCY LOOKED BACK AND SAW THAT THE OTHERS HAD REACHED THE TREES. AT LEAST HE KNEW HIS MEN WERE SAFE. VERY DELIBERATELY HE STOPPED AND KNELT DOWN, HIS RIFLE READY.

COME ON, SIR!

STAY THERE!
I'LL KEEP THIS
BLIGHTER BUSY!



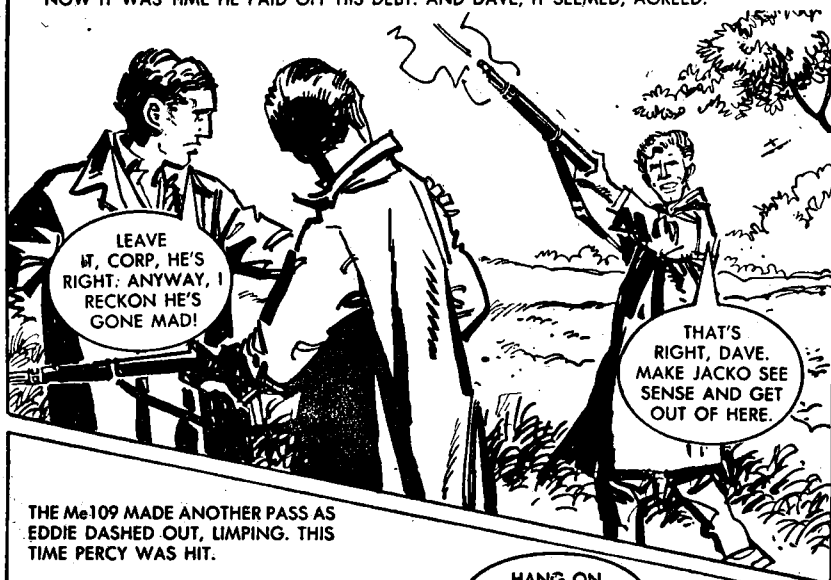
SUDDENLY THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE DEADLY CHATTER OF MACHINE GUNS AS THE NAZI FIGHTER ATTACKED. JACKO AND THE OTHERS LOOKED ON IN HORROR —



EDDIE KNEW WHAT HE HAD TO DO. IT WAS STILL SOME WAY TO THE BRITISH TANKS AND HIS ANKLE WOULD SLOW THEM DOWN. GRIMLY HE POINTED HIS RIFLE AT JACKO.



NEVER BEFORE HAD EDDIE FIRED A GUN IN HIS LIFE, BUT NOW HE LOOSED OFF A WARNING SHOT. THESE BLOKES HAD RISKED THEIR LIVES MORE THAN ONCE TO SAVE HIM. NOW IT WAS TIME HE PAID OFF HIS DEBT. AND DAVE, IT SEEMED, AGREED.



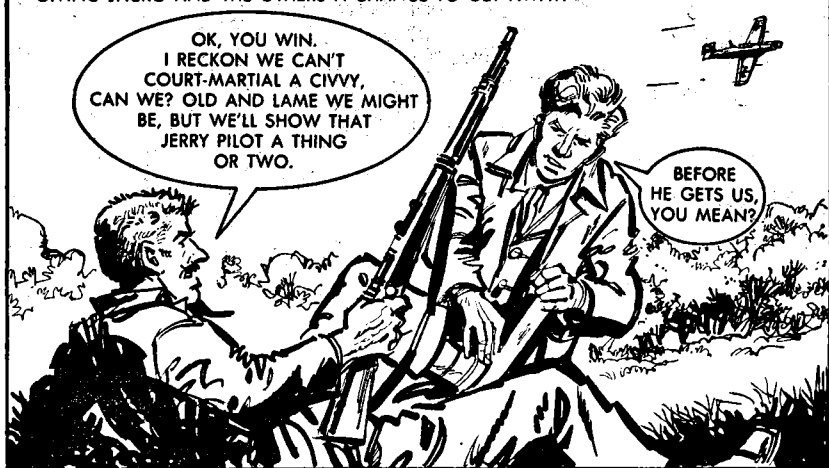
THE Me109 MADE ANOTHER PASS AS EDDIE DASHED OUT, LIMPING. THIS TIME PERCY WAS HIT.



PERCY WAS ALSO CONVINCED THAT EDDIE HAD LOST HIS REASON.



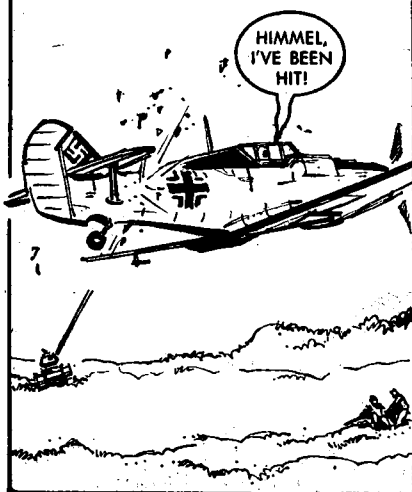
EDDIE WAS RIGHT. THE MESSERSCHMITT WOULD CONCENTRATE ITS ATTENTION ON THEM, GIVING JACKO AND THE OTHERS A CHANCE TO GET AWAY.



BUT HELP WAS AT HAND, IN THE SHAPE OF A BRITISH LIGHT TANK WHICH CRESTED THE RIDGE. AND NOW IT WOULD ALL DEPEND ON THE ACCURACY OF THE BRITISH GUNNER.



THE DIVING Me109 WAS A DIFFICULT TARGET, BUT THE GUNNER KNEW HIS JOB.



THE NAZI PILOT HAD HAD ENOUGH. PERCY AND EDDIE CHEERED AS IT TURNED AWAY FOR GOOD.



THE TWO MEN LIMPED TOWARDS THE TANK, UNABLE TO BELIEVE THEIR LUCK. EDDIE FLUNG AWAY HIS RIFLE.

WELL, I WON'T
BE NEEDING THAT NOW.
I'VE ONLY FIRED IT ONCE AND
I DON'T RECKON I'D HAVE
BEEN MUCH GOOD AT IT.

THEN IT'S
ABOUT TIME YOU
LEARNED. THE WAR'S JUST
STARTED, LADDIE, AND WE'LL
BE NEEDING BLOKES
LIKE YOU.

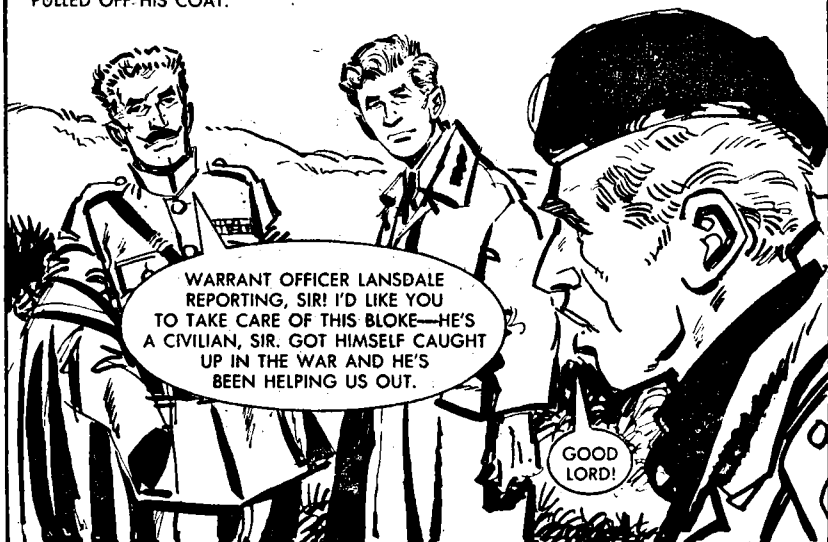
THEN THE TANK STOPPED AND THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT RAN TOWARDS THEM.

COME ON,
YOU CHAPS, LET'S
GET YOU OUT OF HERE.
THIS IS NO PLACE
FOR CIVILIANS.

CIVILIANS?
WHAT A BLINKING
CHEEK! HE THINKS
WE'RE REFUGEES!

I'M NOT
SURPRISED, WITH
THAT MOTH-EATEN
COAT OF
YOURS!

THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT COULD HARDLY BELIEVE HIS EYES AS PERCY STRAIGHTENED UP AND PULLED OFF HIS COAT.



THEY SCROUNGED A LIFT TO THE NEAREST FIELD DRESSING STATION AND JACKO AND ALL THE OTHERS WERE THERE, ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THEM. AND AMID ALL THE CHATTER, EDDIE SUDDENLY REALISED HOW MUCH HE'D GROWN TO ADMIRE THE R.S.M. IN THE HECTIC HEAT OF BATTLE.



BUT IT SEEMED EDDIE STILL HAD IDEAS OF HIS OWN. A FEW MONTHS LATER AT AN INFANTRY TRAINING DEPOT SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND, R.S.M. PERCY LANSDALE LOOKED OVER THE LATEST BATCH OF RECRUITS WHO HAD JUST PASSED OUT . . . AND SAW A FAMILIAR FACE. HIS GRUFF VOICE BECAME ALMOST BENEVOLENT—



YES, THEY WOULD DO, HE THOUGHT. ESPECIALLY IF THEY WERE MADE OF THE SAME STUFF AS EDDIE MERCER!

Commando
THE END

Don't miss your next four all-action Commando books!
They're on sale in two weeks—ask for:

" THE LONG WALK "
" DRINK OR DIE! "

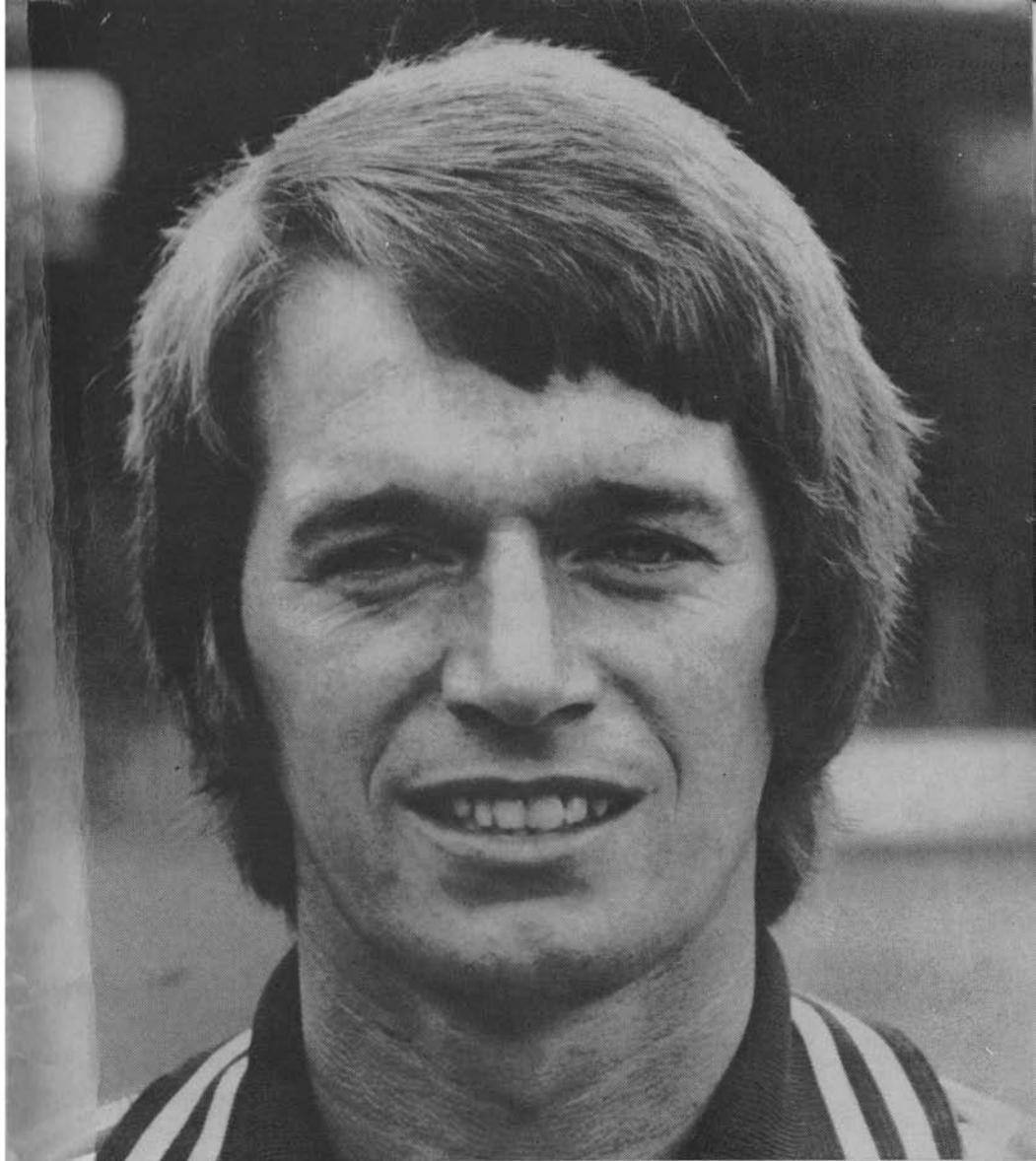
" DANGEROUS DOUBLE "
" MOUNTAIN MARKSMAN "



**DON'T
MISS
OUT
ON THE**

**ACTION-GET
Commando
TODAY!**


*These four smash-hit books
are on sale right now —*
DON'T MISS EM!



Stars of Soccer – Colin Suggett

THE OLD WAR-HORSE

PERCY LANSDALE was a Regimental Sergeant Major. He'd been a soldier for a long, long time, but now it seemed they were putting him out to pasture—sending him back to England to train recruits. And he was furious—his place was with his battalion, in the shooting war. So when fate gave him a golden chance to go into action he grabbed it with both hands. He'd show those young whipper-snappers what a real professional soldier could do!

 **Commando**

